

**From clashing to matching:
examining the legitimisation codes that underpin
shifting views about climate change**

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree and nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research written by me, except where noted in the text. Any help that I have received in my research work and in the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of candidate:

Eleanor Glenn

***I dedicate this thesis to all the unsung heroes
working for a brighter future***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|------|
| Statement of original authorship | i |
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| Table of contents | iv |
| List of Figures | ix |
| List of Tables | xi |
| List of abbreviations | xii |
| Transcription key | xiii |
| ABSTRACT | xv |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY | 1 |
| 1.1.1 The climate change problem | 1 |
| 1.1.2 Differing views about climate change | 2 |
| 1.1.3 The communications and engagement response | 3 |
| 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM | 4 |
| 1.3 RESEARCH PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS | 6 |
| 1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY | 7 |
| 1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS | 8 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1 INTRODUCTION | 10 |
| 2.2 APPROACH TO THE LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.3 VIEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE | 13 |
| 2.3.1 The psychological literature | 14 |
| 2.3.2 The sociological literature | 20 |
| 2.3.3 Discussion | 24 |
| 2.4 SHIFTING VIEWS AND FINDING COMMON GROUND | 31 |
| 2.4.1 Shifting views | 32 |
| 2.4.2 Finding common ground | 34 |
| 2.4.3 Discussion | 36 |
| 2.5 CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT (CCC&E) | 39 |
| 2.5.1 CCC&E principles and recommendations | 40 |
| 2.5.2 Beyond CCC&E | 44 |
| 2.5.3 Discussion | 44 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----|
| 2.6 | CONCLUSION | 46 |
| CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY | | 50 |
| 3.1 | INTRODUCTION | 50 |
| 3.2 | Theoretical framework | 51 |
| 3.2.1 | The task | 51 |
| 3.2.2 | Legitimation Code Theory | 51 |
| 3.3 | Research design | 61 |
| 3.3.1 | Qualitative research | 61 |
| 3.3.2 | Case study approach | 63 |
| 3.3.3 | Rationale for modified focus groups..... | 64 |
| 3.3.4 | Rationale for interviews | 65 |
| 3.4 | Data collection | 65 |
| 3.4.1 | Data collection phases | 65 |
| 3.4.2 | Case 1: Rotary..... | 66 |
| 3.4.3 | Case 2: Think tanks..... | 69 |
| 3.5 | Data analysis | 71 |
| 3.5.1 | Analysis of legitimation codes..... | 72 |
| 3.5.2 | Analysis of constellations | 75 |
| 3.5.3 | Analysis of shifts and common ground | 75 |
| 3.6 | Ethical considerations..... | 76 |
| 3.7 | Quality of research | 77 |
| 3.8 | CONCLUSION | 80 |
| CHAPTER 4: ROTARY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE | | 83 |
| 4.1 | INTRODUCTION | 83 |
| 4.2 | THE PROBLEM..... | 84 |
| 4.2.1 | Physical climate change | 84 |
| 4.2.2 | The climate change debate | 90 |
| 4.2.3 | Discussion..... | 92 |
| 4.3 | THE SOLUTIONS | 94 |
| 4.3.1 | Agency and personal attributes | 95 |
| 4.3.2 | Simple, local, tangible solutions..... | 98 |
| 4.3.3 | Discussion..... | 100 |
| 4.4 | Basis for knowing about climate change..... | 103 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| 4.4.1 | Lived experience | 103 |
| 4.4.2 | Profession-based knowledge | 105 |
| 4.4.3 | Personal attributes and identity | 106 |
| 4.4.4 | Trusted sources..... | 107 |
| 4.4.5 | Downplaying climate science | 108 |
| 4.4.6 | Discussion | 109 |
| 4.5 | COSMOLOGIES AND COMMON GROUND..... | 111 |
| 4.5.1 | Binary constellations and their codes..... | 111 |
| 4.5.2 | Shifts and common ground | 117 |
| 4.5.3 | The importance of cosmologies | 121 |
| 4.5.4 | Discussion | 122 |
| 4.6 | CONCLUSION | 123 |
| CHAPTER 5: THINK TANKERS' VIEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE | | 126 |
| 5.1 | INTRODUCTION | 126 |
| 5.2 | THE CLIMATE CHANGE PROBLEM | 128 |
| 5.2.1 | Physical climate change | 128 |
| 5.2.2 | The climate change debate..... | 130 |
| 5.2.3 | Analysis | 134 |
| 5.3 | CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS..... | 138 |
| 5.3.1 | [A]: Public policy influencers | 140 |
| 5.3.2 | [B]: The public discourse..... | 150 |
| 5.3.3 | [C]: Engaging with the public | 152 |
| 5.3.4 | Analysis | 153 |
| 5.4 | BASIS FOR KNOWING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE | 161 |
| 5.4.1 | 'Ideology' | 162 |
| 5.4.2 | 'Evidence' | 164 |
| 5.4.3 | 'Ideology' and 'evidence' | 165 |
| 5.4.4 | Analysis | 166 |
| 5.5 | CONCLUSION | 167 |
| CHAPTER 6: THINK TANKERS' CONSTELLATIONS AND COMMON GROUND | | 171 |
| 6.1 | INTRODUCTION | 171 |
| 6.2 | ANALYSIS OF CONSTELLATIONS | 171 |
| 6.3 | COMMON GROUND | 177 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----|
| 6.3.1 | Finding common ground | 178 |
| 6.3.2 | Failure to find common ground | 180 |
| 6.3.3 | Disintegration of common ground..... | 186 |
| 6.3.4 | Summary of common ground analyses..... | 194 |
| 6.4 | CONCLUSION | 195 |
| CHAPTER 7: PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT | | 198 |
| 7.1 | INTRODUCTION | 198 |
| 7.2 | ROTARY AND THINK TANK FINDINGS | 199 |
| 7.2.1 | Cosmologies | 199 |
| 7.2.2 | Finding agreement and common ground | 202 |
| 7.3 | APPROACH TO CCC&E ANALYSIS | 203 |
| 7.4 | CCC&E PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES | 206 |
| 7.4.1 | Principles from LCT and CCC&E approaches | 206 |
| 7.4.2 | Translation..... | 209 |
| 7.4.3 | Transformation..... | 215 |
| 7.4.4 | Comparing strategies | 222 |
| 7.5 | CONCLUSION | 225 |
| CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT | | 227 |
| 8.1 | INTRODUCTION | 227 |
| 8.2 | CCC&E FOR LAY AUDIENCES | 228 |
| 8.2.1 | Accepting climate change | 229 |
| 8.2.2 | Taking action on climate change..... | 232 |
| 8.2.3 | Supporting policy responses for systemic change | 235 |
| 8.3 | CCC&E FOR PUBLIC POLICY INFLUENCERS | 239 |
| 8.3.1 | Translation for public policy influencers | 240 |
| 8.3.2 | Transformation for public policy influencers | 242 |
| 8.4 | METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT | 246 |
| 8.4.1 | Maximizing value for participants..... | 246 |
| 8.4.2 | Maximizing value for engagers | 251 |
| 8.5 | BEYOND CCC&E | 252 |
| 8.6 | CONCLUSION | 254 |
| CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION..... | | 256 |
| 9.1 | INTRODUCTION | 256 |

| | | |
|------------------|--|-----|
| 9.2 | SUMMARY OF FINDINGS | 256 |
| 9.3 | CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE | 263 |
| 9.3.1 | Theoretical contributions | 263 |
| 9.3.2 | Substantive contributions..... | 266 |
| 9.3.3 | Methodological contributions | 267 |
| 9.4 | LIMITATIONS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH..... | 268 |
| 9.4.1 | Knowledge, knowers and knowing..... | 269 |
| 9.4.2 | Generalizability | 269 |
| 9.4.3 | LCT CCC&E in practice..... | 270 |
| 9.4.4 | CCC&E and beyond | 271 |
| 9.5 | CONCLUSION..... | 271 |
| Appendices | | 274 |
| References..... | | 289 |

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: ‘Knower’, ‘knowing’ and ‘knowledge’, in connection with a statement about climate change

Figure 2.1: ‘Knower’, ‘knowing’ and ‘knowledge’, in connection with a statement about climate change

Figure 2.2: ‘Knowers’ and ‘knowing’ are the objects of analysis (in purple) of many psychological and sociological studies

Figure 2.3: Discourse typologies are based on analysis of the content matter or descriptive features of statements and are sometimes correlated with knowers’ attributes, context or processes of knowing

Figure 2.4: Psychological and narrative analyses identify mismatches between lay people’s ways of knowing about or expressing climate change and scientific climate change discourses

Figure 2.5: A complementary approach would identify the organizing principles of statements made by different groups of people as a systematic basis for comparison

Figure 2.6: Existing approaches examine the influence of knowers’ attributes, context and knowing processes on shifts

Figure 2.7: A complementary approach would compare and identify patterns in the organizing principles that underpin shifting statements about climate change

Figure 2.8: A complementary approach would identify the organizing principles of audiences’ knowledge practices and those of climate change communications

Figure 3.1: Relationships among cosmology, constellations, knowledge claims and legitimation codes, showing a binary constellation. Purple boxes indicate the study’s main focus on analyzing the legitimation codes of knowledge claims

Figure 3.2: The specialization plane and codes (Maton, 2014)

Figure 3.3: The semantic plane and codes (Maton, 2015)

Figure 3.4: Data collection phases for each case study

Figure 3.5: Data analysis phases and relationship to research questions

Figure 3.6: A three-stage process for analyzing legitimation codes

Figure 4.1: Example analysis of both the content matter and organizing principles of a Rotary statement about climate change responses

Figure 5.1: Players in the climate change debate in Australia, as portrayed by think tank participants

Figure 5.2: Objects of analysis in this study, [A] to [D], based on participants' identification of players in the climate change issue

Figure 5.3: Example analysis of both the content matter and organizing principles of a think tank statement about climate change responses

Figure 7.1: Analytical process for developing CCC&E recommendations for lay audiences and public policy influencers

Figure 7.2: Translation for lay audiences, where the messenger and audience have different specialization codes

Figure 7.3: Translation for lay audiences, where the messenger and audience share the same specialization codes

Figure 7.4: Translation as practiced by the think tank participants, in which they found solutions that were able to fit in multiple constellations

Figure 7.5: Transformation for lay audiences, showing specialization code movements in stages by the messenger (green) and audience (blue)

Figure 7.6: Transformation for think tankers, involving a shift from a knower code to a knowledge code basis of knowing about climate science

Figure 7.7: Transformation for think tankers on climate solutions, involving shifts to an elite code basis for developing solutions, with a strong basis in climate science.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Rotary participants' 'good' and 'bad' constellations

Table 5.1: The specialization codes of problems and solutions identified by think tank participants

Table 6.1: Think tank constellations and areas of common ground

Table 7.1: Summary of translation and transformation strategies for lay audiences and public policy influencers.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|--|
| CCC&E | Climate change communications and engagement |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LCT | Legitimation Code Theory |

LCT concepts

| | |
|----|---------------------|
| ER | Epistemic relations |
| SR | Social relations |
| SG | Semantic gravity |
| SD | Semantic density |

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

- , Short pause in speech
- ... Long pause in speech
- . Downward inflection, marking end of sentence
- ? Upward inflection, marking a question
- ! Sentence ending with strong emphasis
- italics* Strong emphasis on a particular word
- Speech cut short
- { Overlapping speech (e.g. an interruption)
- () Non-verbal (e.g. nodding head, laughter)

ABSTRACT

This study investigates people's views about climate change. It examines how they shift in conversation, and the potential for climate change communications and engagement (CCC&E) to engage with and shift views. Existing research tends to analyze statements of view as the reflections of cognitive processes or social and cultural phenomena, rather than also analyzing the forms taken by knowledge expressed in the statements themselves. The study employs a sociological framework, Legitimation Code Theory, to analyze the organizing principles of statements in the form of different 'legitimation codes'. These represent the organizing principles of statements that are valorized in a particular setting, such as being more strongly based on scientific evidence or on subjective experience, more concrete or abstract, more simple or complex.

The study analyzes modified focus group and interview conversations of a lay group and a group of public policy influencers from think tanks in Australia. Analyses of participants' shifts in views and processes of finding common ground reveal the importance of the legitimation codes underpinning the discussions. Changes in lay participants' statements from dismissing to accepting climate change and responses to it were associated with a shift from a 'code clash' to a 'code match'. Shifts in legitimation codes were also key to the think tank participants finding some common ground despite their ideological differences. Further, the study reconceptualizes the CCC&E strategies of translation and transformation in LCT terms so that translation becomes a 'code match' and transformation a 'code drift' or 'code shift'. Some suggestions for CCC&E are made based on the empirical findings and reconceptualized strategies. For lay audiences, these include emphasizing the personal qualities of climate scientists (translation) or using familiar analogies to communicate the science (transformation); encouraging action on the basis of the good citizen "doing your bit" (translation); and building support for systemic change such as carbon pricing by invoking concepts of fairness and the responsibility of big polluters (transformation). For public policy influencers, translation means retaining their ideological preferences and finding common ground, while transformation requires a change in their modus operandi to weaken the ideological basis if it conflicts with the science.

